Introduction

How can being an effective researcher help me in my job? That is the question I ask myself as this class draws to a close. I am currently an Instructional Technology Specialist at Luella Middle School. This is my first year in this position after 8 years of teaching Special Education students math and reading in the 6th grade. As I move forward, I am now challenged to use the knowledge that I have gleaned from this class and others in my EDS program to help make an impact on the teachers and students in my school. I hope to do this through further research on Blended Learning Environments. I then will aspire to take this research back into my job so that my colleagues and I can transform this new learning model into a means to help improve student achievement.

Review of Learning

Through the many assignments in this class I feel that I have been able to increase the breadth of my knowledge in the area of educational research. The Literature Review, while a painful process, encouraged me to delve into the latest research in educational technology so that I could actually demonstrate to my teachers the research behind the methods I was showing them. When looking at the various research-oriented papers relating to my topic of classroom response systems, I was able to see that there are various methods of research to prove whether a hypothesis was true or not. I found that many people would use different methods of surveys to assess the feelings and attitudes of students using classroom response systems. I discovered that the researchers could use various quantitative methods to siphon data from classes in order to prove whether or not the classroom response systems were effective. I feel that these articles can be a foundation from which to launch myself as I go forward in my work as an Instructional Technology Specialist.

Implications

Education is an exciting career these days as all sorts of new technology finds its way into the classroom. Using the research methods I have developed through this class, I would like to find better ways to infuse more student-centric technologies into our school. The best way that I feel this is possible is through a Blended Learning delivery model. Clayton Christensen (2008), from Harvard, describes online learning as being the “Disruption” that will change the United States educational system. He goes on to explain how student-centric online learning could take root and transform the learning landscape from outside the present K-12 public education system (Christensen, 2008). While understanding this concept personally is one thing, it is an entirely new ball game trying to convince teachers that this is the path toward which education is moving. During the next school year Luella Middle School will be venturing into the Blended Learning delivery model of instruction. All of the academic subjects in 6th, 7th and 8th grade will have an online component to their classes. During our post-planning this year and pre-planning next year I will be completing extensive professional development with my teachers to prepare them for this transition. Planning for this change now is essential. I plan to use my newly honed skills in research to help illustrate to the teachers the value of this endeavor. I also hope to research variable methods of facilitating such an immense transition in a school setting. Lastly, I may try to actually do some research of my own so that I could gather some data to help shed light on the various ups and downs of Blended Learning.

Conclusion

In the future, I hope to be able to take the valuable research skills that I have learned and apply them to my duties as Instructional Technology Specialist whenever possible. I also want to utilize those research skills gained during completion of the literature review on classroom response systems and begin using that expertise in a new way, i.e., the Blended Learning Environment model. As I find research that deals with Blended Learning Environments, I hope to be able to take various scholarly articles, analyze the important data within and apply it to my current position in order to better my teachers’ instruction and ultimately student achievement.

References

Christensen, C, Horn, M, & Johnson, C (2008). *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Orhan, Feza (2008).REDESIGNING A COURSE FOR BLENDED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*. *9*, 1-13.

Sethy, Satya (2008).DISTANCE EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: An Overwhelming Desire towards Blended Learning. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education-*. *9*, 14-29.